

Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Oversight Hearing: "The Future of the Forest Economy"
Scheduled for Thursday, May 21, 2009 10:00 am

TESTIMONY of Mike Wood

My name is Mike Wood. I am the Business Representative for the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Carpenters Industrial Council Local 3074. I live in Quincy, California, located in Plumas County, home of the Quincy Library Group. We are nestled in a little mountain valley at the north end of the Sierra Nevada surrounded by National Forests. In fact, over 75% of Plumas County is in national forests.

I represent all the sawmill workers in Plumas County, which 8 years ago numbered about 600. Today, however, we are down to 200. The decline is partly due to markets, but mainly because the Herger Feinstein Quincy Library Group Act has not been implemented at the pace and scale mandated by Congress.

We have ridden the economic rollercoaster many times before. Each time, we have tightened our belts, weathered the storm, then gone back to work. In time the markets will rebound, but this time there may not be any work to go back to, because once a mill is closed it is not likely to reopen again unless there is enough timber to feed it, and that supply is by no means assured if the management of National Forests continues as it has in recent years. Due to decades of fire suppression, more work than ever before needs to be done to prevent fire from destroying it all. But that work can't be done without the workers and industrial capacity that is being closed down.

We produce a valuable commodity and generate electricity from a renewable resource. We make a decent living with Union scale jobs that we can support our families on. We live in communities that are small and friendly. We live in one of the most beautiful places on earth, and we want to work to keep it that way. Our work will not only save the forests and the watersheds it protects, but it will also save the lifestyle we enjoy so much living in the mountains.

We have already seen two communities in our area severely impacted due to the act not being fully implemented. To our east is the town of Loyalton, which lost over 160 Union scale jobs in 2001 when Sierra Pacific Industries was forced to close its mill there. SPI had built a new, multimillion dollar, state of the art sawmill to process the small logs projected to be generated by the HFQLG Projects. The logs never came due to litigation, and SPI dismantled it a few years after it was built. To our west is the community of Concow that lost over 200 homes due to a fire last year. An HFQLG project that was scheduled for implementation two years earlier would have protected that community from its destruction.

Quincy is next. The 150 jobs we lost three weeks ago when the small log mill shut down is just the beginning. Either by fire or loss of jobs, Quincy and all of Plumas County is in jeopardy. If HFQLG is not fully implemented, hundreds of additional mill jobs will disappear. That also means the loss of hundreds of logger and trucker jobs, and hundreds

of Forest Service jobs. The community businesses will decline or close, causing even more loss of jobs. There will not be enough jobs to support our schools, roads or government. No one will be left to fix the forest and it will all burn. Just pause for a moment a think about that.

This is not a prediction for the distant future. It is a description of next year, or maybe the year after, or at most the year after that. Time is of the essence.

Although litigation has deterred the pilot project and only a fraction of the work has been accomplished, enough has been done to prove it works. It has been scrutinized by scientists and tested by fire. It produces enough saw log volume and biomass to make the projects economically viable. It reduces the fuel loads and crown closures and has been proven to knock catastrophic crown fires to the ground. Protecting the forests is essential to protecting the watersheds, which are so critical to the future of California and the West.

HFQLG projects should be allowed to be implemented at their scheduled pace and scale without any further delay. They are designed by highly skilled forest service personnel with many years of training and education to protect the environment and make the forests fire resilient. Anything less will not accomplish the mission of fire resiliency. Some critics of QLG argue against this strategy because they don't want either the Forest Service or the timber industry to make money off federal forests. The HFQLG Act is the best tool to do the best work to fix what is broken. This is the way to manage the forests, and its example should be implemented through out the west. I am requesting that Congress help us protect our natural resources by helping us get the forests back to a fire resilient state.

The Congressional Declaration of National Environmental Policy declares that it will be the policy of the government to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony, and fulfill the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations of Americans. Both man and nature will suffer catastrophic consequences unless fuel reduction and other forest health projects are actually implemented on the ground much faster and more extensively than has been done so far.

We will very much appreciate all the help you can give us, and the Forest Service, in implementing both NEPA and the Herger Feinstein Quincy Library Group Act at its scheduled pace and scale.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Wood
Business Representative
Carpenters Industrial Council Local 3074